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Message Text

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43
ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 A-01 OPR-02 SY-10 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01

NEA-11 FEA-02 INT-08 SCI-06 DRC-01 IO-14 /171 W
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R 241400Z JAN 74
FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7478

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, ECON, HA
SUBJECT: DUVALIER ADDRESSES MASS RALLY; ANNOUNCES INCREASE IN MINIMUM WAGE

1. GOH STAGED MASS RALLY BEFORE THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE IN PORT-AU-PRINCE JANUARY 22 TO COMMEMORATE THE THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF PRESIDENT JEAN-CLAUDE DUVALIER'S DESIGNATION AS SUCCESSOR TO THE PRESIDENCY IN 1971.

2. ADDRESSING ENTHUSIASTIC CROWD OF 10-20,000, MAINLY WORKERS AND YOUTH LET OFF FROM SCHOOL FOR THE DAY, DUVALIER STRESSED GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO ALLEVIATE EFFECTS OF INFLATION. HE ANNOUNCED IMMEDIATE INCREASE IN THE MINIMUM WAGE OF 30 PERCENT (FROM $1.00 TO $1.30 PER DAY); ESTABLISHMENT OF FIRM PRICE CONTROLS FOR A RANGE OF "NECESSARY" ARTICLES OF CONSUMPTION, BOTH IMPORTED AND DOMESTICALLY-PRODUCED; AND ELIMINATION OF OBLIGATORY DEDUCTION OF 4-10 PERCENT IN SALARIES OF ALL GOVERNMENT WORKERS. (DEDUCTIONS, OSTENSIBLY FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS, HAD BEEN IN EFFECT FOR SOME EIGHT YEARS; THEIR ELIMINATION WILL INCREASE TAKE-HOME PAY OF GOVERNMENT WORKERS BY APPROXIMATELY $1.7 MILLION ANNUALLY, ACCORDING TO THE PRESIDENT.) DUVALIER ALSO ATTRIBUTED INFLATION LARGELY TO FOREIGN DEVELOPMENTS, CITING ARAB PETROLEUM PRICE INCREASES AS
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CREATING A "PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT SITUATION" FOR DEVELOPED

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COUNTRIES AS WELL AS THE UNDER-DEVELOPED.

3. AS ON OCCASION OF MASS RALLY HELD JANUARY LAST YEAR AFTER THE KNOX-CHRISTENSEN KIDNAPPING, DUVALIER ALSO SPOKE BRIEFLY IN CREOLE, TO THE GREAT DELIGHT OF THE CROWD. STRESS OF HIS REMARKS IN CREOLE WAS THAT HE HAD TAKEN POWER "COMPLETELY" OR "TOTALLY" --THE

PRESIDENT'S MOST FORCEFUL STATEMENT TO THIS EFFECT THE EMBASSY HAS HEARD.

4. COMMENT: THE ANNIVERSARY OF JEAN-CLAUDE DUVALIER'S DESIGNATION AS PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSOR WAS NOT COMMEMORATED IN ANY SPECIAL WAY IN 1972?94 1973, IN CONTRAST TO THE MASS RALLY AND OTHER HEAVILY-PUBLICIZED COMMEMORATIVE EVENTS STAGED THIS JANUARY 22. THIS NEW DEPARTURE UNDERSCORES THE PRESIDENT'S EMERGENCE INTO THE LEADING ROLE IN THE GOH DURING THE PAST YEAR, AND HIS VPNTINUED EMERGENCE FROM HIS FATHER'S SHADOW AS PRESIDENT OF HAITI IN HIS OWN RIGHT. IT IS DIFFICULT TO GAUGE POPULAR SENTIMENTS IN HAITI, BUT THE COMPOSITION AND ENTHUSIASM OF THE RALLY JANUARY 22 SUGGESTS THAT THE YOUNG PRESIDENT ENJOYS GENERAL POPULARITY WITH THE YOUNG AND THE SIMPLER PEOPLE IN HAITI.

4. THE INCREASE IN THE MINIMUM WAGE ANNOUNCED BY THE PRESIDENT DOES LITTLE MORE THAN RECOGNIZE THE INCREASE IN THE COST OF LIVING SINCE THE LAST MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE (FROM SIXTY CENTS TO $1.00) WAS ORDERED IN 1971. A GENERAL ESCALATION OF WAGES IS EXPECTED TO FOLLOW, BUT ON A GRADUATED BASIS. EMPLOYERS ARE ESTIMATING THAT INCREASES OF FROM 10 TO 15 PERCENT MAY BE REQUIRED FOR MIDDLE-GRADE WORKERS, WITH SOMEWHAT LESSER INCREASES FOR THE MORE HIGHLY PAID.
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